Students' Views on Degree Course Enrolled in and Their Eventual Employability

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Abstract

This paper aims to contribute to the current lack of research literature in the Botswana context by reviewing quantitative feedback collected from students in a faculty/school of a part-government-owned higher education institution. The paper particularly attempts to examine whether students enrolled on a bridging course to a UK degree honours degree offered by a quasi-government higher education institution agree that the bridging course and the institutional support offered prepares them for higher education and whether they are interested in using such support structures to enhance their eventual employability. This study draws on data from students enrolled in a common bridging course for five (5) UK honours business-related degree programmes. It involved feedback from a common questionnaire administered to a total of 530 post-secondary school students (296 students in 2015 and 234 students in 2017) at the same level of study after six (6) weeks of teaching in the bridging course in a longitudinal survey over two academic years of intake. The selection of students was based on age and programme of study. The two cohorts indicated that they chose their course to increase future marketability as well as to obtain technical skills in their chose fields. A comparison of the two cohorts under "level of interest" also indicated that they intended to make full use of extra-class activities to enhance their employability. The students ranked group activities highly and showed a high level of interest in allowing role models at the institution and in industry to influence them. The findings indicated that high visibility of lecturers/Course Managers and interactions with guest lecturers from the industry are valued by the students. The study is limited to students in one school/faculty of one quasi-government funded higher education institution that offers degree courses in collaboration and partnership with British universities. The course design, name and curricula are therefore somewhat influenced by the UK partners. The inclusion of students across the whole institution could result in different findings. The higher education sector in Botswana is undergoing significant changes. There is no

current quantitative research done in Botswana higher education institutions on perceptions of bridging students on their choice of programmes studied and their eventual employability. The institutional support structures available and students' choices of such institutions and degree programmes require research-informed insights.

Subject Areas

Education management

Keywords

Employability, Bridging Course, Foundation Course Institutional Support, Course Selection, Botswana

1. Introduction

The paper aimed to compare two intakes at a college delivering post-senior secondary school business education with regards to their bridging course that was aimed at preparing them for further study in university degree courses that delivers in collaboration with United Kingdom university partners. The bridging and degree courses cover 1) international finance and banking, 2) accounting and finance, 3) entrepreneurship and business leadership, 4) business management and 5) international tourism management. Two intakes/cohorts of post-secondary students enrolled in these courses were investigated with respect to their level of agreement and level of interest that the courses they are enrolled in were preparing them for eventual employment and how interested they were in utilizing the facilities availed to them by the institution to try and assist them in this.

The research structure of the paper proceeds with a general background to the Botswana tertiary education level environment, before proceeding to the research motivation and research aim of the paper, a justification of a research gap identified, followed by a conceptual framework discussion, previous research reviewed, a methodology section, findings and discussion followed lastly by conclusions that highlight practical and theoretical implications and suggestions for further research. Some limitations in this contribution that future research might address are also covered.

1.1. General Background

Botswana has 35 registered institutions, comprising 20 classified as public and 15 classified as private (TEC/HRDC 2015). The registered private institutions comprise one university, three university colleges, an academy, two institutes/institutions and seven colleges. The registered public institutions include the research institution which supported by is a government subvention. The higher education sector in Botswana is undergoing changes, whereby the Government of Botswa-

na has approved an Act of Parliament (No. 17 of 2013) establishing the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) to replace the Tertiary Education Council (TEC). The TEC was previously responsible for registering tertiary education institutions.

The institution is classified as a "public" institution. It is registered to operate at two sites in the capital city in Gaborone and in Francistown in the second city in the north of the country. The college is registered to offer technician, diploma, professional (for example Insurance Institute of South Africa—IISA), professional accountancy (ACCA, CIMA, BICA, CIA, AAT), certificate, undergraduate bachelor and postgraduate masters courses grouped into four areas: 1) accounting programmes, 2) business programmes, 3) computing programmes and 4) insurance programmes. The undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes are offered in collaboration and partnership with three British universities.

While registered as public institution, the institution will be referred to a quasi-government institution due to its unique history. The College was initially set up to address the shortage of professional accountants in the country and initially offered courses leading to the chartered certified accountant (ACCA) and the chartered management accountant (CIMA) qualifications.

The college has since expanded to offer undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in diverse areas such as accounting and finance, business enterprise, travel and tourism management, risk management, strategic management, computer systems engineering, project management and applied business computing. The government established the institution with three partners. This makes the college somewhat quasi-government rather than a strictly public institution.

The table below (Table 1) summarises the re-organisation that has occurred in the tertiary education sector in Botswana and indicates the new designations and mandates and attempts to highlight some of the implications of these.

Botswana has been dependent on diamond-mining revenue for over fifty (50) years and an acceptable that this finite resource is running out and that the economy needs to move towards a more knowledge-based economy is widely acceptable officially.

This is in line with the flipping of Botswana's economy from an "old economy" that produces and relies on a lot of unskilled labour [1] as below, to a knowledge-based economy that produces more skilled labour through its tertiary institutions. Skilled labour would be expected to be a base from which more knowledge workers are used in the economy (Figure 1).

Internally the institution is organized into schools, sometimes referred to as faculties and this research is situated in a school/faculty at the Gaborone site were five undergraduate degree courses in 1) accounting & finance, 2) business enterprise, now offered as entrepreneurship and business leadership, 3) business management, 4) travel and tourism and the newest programme, 5) international banking and finance.

Table 1. Reorganisation and re-designation of government ministries (Author compilation).

Prior name	New name	Mandate	Implications
Ministry of Education and Skills Development	**Ministry of Basic Education**	• early childhood development and • learning for pre-primary up to senior secondary education • To interpret education policies, design, develop, evaluate, and ensure prompt delivery of quality education to learners from pre-primary to secondary education level through the coordination of in-service training, inspectorate and Out of School Education and Training (OSET)	Tertiary Education, STEM need overseeing.
	Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology	• policy on student financing, • tertiary institutions • coordinating research, science, and technology development to • transform Botswana into **knowledge-based economy**, while also, • producing graduates that are **relevant** to industry requirements	• **Knowledge Based Economy** agenda. • **Relevance** of graduates to industry needs (as managed/articulated by HRDC—in charge of the HRD Strategy)
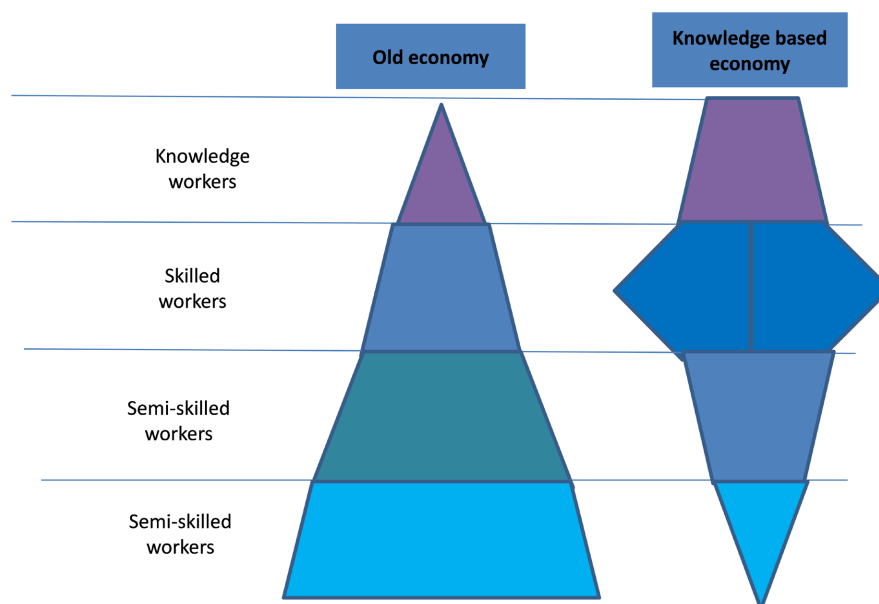
Figure 1. Knowledge-based economy that produces skilled labour.

1.1.1. Research Motivation and Research Aim

The research was motivated by the need to investigate students enrolled in a bridging course post-secondary school level with an aim to eventually provide evidence for the College to move towards what [2] suggests that business schools should change from mere places of learning, to learning organizations. By finding out the views of students enrolled in a bridging course in this southern Africa-based business school, some of the criticisms that business schools must participate in quality research to ensure legitimacy among other academic discip-

lines is hoped to be addressed.

1.1.2. Research Gap

There appears to be gap in empirical research based on partly state-controlled and funded business schools in Botswana with respect to how they prepare students for higher education study. Business schools of this nature prepare post-secondary school students for degree courses with foreign higher education partner universities. The gap is further investigated by asking chosen questions about interest as well as agreement (both from a student perspective) in using available institution resources and arrangements including library, information technology facilities [3] that enhance information literacy.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

There is limited research on transitioning higher education institutions in Botswana, particularly those in the unique situation that the college finds itself in where it has ambitions to turn into a university, and the historical links to a private company and government must be negotiated so that the college could be truly public or private. The perceptions of students studying for degrees offered in this set of circumstances can provide insight into their reasons for choosing courses offered and their perceived eventual employability.

The research therefore seeks to contribute to the current lack of research literature in the Botswana context by reviewing quantitative feedback collected from students in a faculty/school of a part-government-owned higher education institution. It also attempts to examine whether students enrolled on a bridging course to a UK degree honours degree offered by a quasi-government higher education institution agree that the bridging course and the institutional support offered prepare them for higher education and whether they are interested in using such support structures to enhance their eventual employability. While bridging and foundation can sometimes be used interchangeably in some institutions, specifically in the context of African universities, [4] found that bridging course that tend to re-teach matriculation level subjects are not as useful as actual somewhat technical and subject-matter-based foundation courses. [4] found that due to pressures in funding, among other issues, the University of Johannesburg was phasing bridging courses and implementing foundation courses instead, despite the value that bridging courses provide. Since this research was concluded, the College has also stopped the shorter duration bridging course for a full-academic year foundation level course making the overall duration of the business courses longer. They used to be three-half years in duration but are not four years. Other changes in the regulatory environment and accreditation arrangements have also contributed to this change.

2. Previous Research

Research on bridging education is at embryonic stages [5] with little evidence to assist program development. [5] used Guglielmino's Self-Directedness Scale and

Kolb's Learning Style Inventory on adult immigrants in Canada, focusing on three professions; nursing, pharmacy, and teacher programs, and suggested that internationally educated professionals (IEPs) were found in conflicting quadrants of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory and that IEPs showed self-directed learning.

2.1. Institutional Support/Facilities and Student Satisfaction

Standardized and tested student satisfaction measuring instruments such as the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), see [6], are available but have not been used in this study. Of the two versions of the SSI available for four-year institutions, the comprehensive Form A was used by [6] to study dimensions of satisfaction and impact on student's overall academic experience in Armenia. While this was applied across randomly selected students (n = 372) at 12 selected institutions in their third and fourth years with enough college experience, applicability to bridging students halfway through a 12-week bridging course for a three-year degree was not considered fitting for this study that also attempts to gauge perceive readiness for work at the half-way point (six weeks). Nevertheless, the findings from the study indicate that faculty services play a crucial role in overall student satisfaction in Armenian higher education while three faculty dimensions were found to negatively affect student satisfaction, namely: knowledgeable faculty, faculty teaching styles and graduate teaching assistants.

Previous research has found that many factors can contribute to student engagement with the course and utilization of available resources, for example, local school libraries and the academic library collaboration can be mutually beneficial, [7], because the complex world of information in the 21st century cannot be fairly expected or assumed to lie solely with school librarians.

A knowledge-based economy, particularly for Botswana, is a nation-wide response to the unsustainability of minerals (diamond)-dependent economy. In this regard, since the new Ministry is charged with assisting Botswana to become a knowledge-based economy, and is also in charge of influencing the operations of tertiary education institutions and their course offerings research from Canada [8] suggests that traditional "*siloing*" by institutions of sustainability issues into disciplines can be avoided by including the "head, heart and hands" (in other words, thought, passion and practice) into the design of a first-year course with sustainability focus and harnessing student sustainability characteristics of holistic systems thinking, sustainability knowledge, awareness & integration and acting for positive change.

Consequently, due to the changing institutional environment obtained at the research site such as; 1) changing overseas university partners, 2) changing from a full franchise degree offering to a collaboration with the first two years of the three-year degree offered to be a diploma to be topped up at third-year, 3) a new undergraduate programme mix on offer (inclusion of the international banking and finance, and structural changes in the regulatory environment (see intro-

duction above) a fresh perspective was needed at this research site. Perceptions of eventual needed to be baselined among this cohort so that, as [9] notes, education systems that restrict creativity, capability, and ability to relate to others while conditioning young people to depend on others for employment opportunities are not in step with society needs in the new millennium.

The typical/modern bridging student (2015-2017) is constantly connected to the internet (either for social media or for informal research on what they are learning). Varonis (2015) suggests using principles of "*universal design*" to make equivalent information and content accessible to learners can be employed by faculty and course designers—for example, the use of oral (voice) recorded feedback. [10] suggest that some overconfidence in students transitioning from general education when entering higher education might be evident if no adjustment from the more traditional teaching methods used in general education is ensured through technical and further education, which might have different names in different institutions. In the case of this institution, this articulation is through what is termed a bridging course.

On the other hand, [11] found that the main factors that influence student choice to study five private higher education institutions in Australia can be grouped into six domains: 1) student perception, 2) access and opportunity, 3) learning environments, 4) quality of teachers, 5) course design and 6) graduate success. While student perception is measured in this research, the whole six factors in these findings are not easily applicable to the research cohort under study as most of the students are funded through a government grant as the higher education institute is classified as a public institution by the authorities.

2.2. Employability, Work Readiness and Marketability

Research has attempted to link the acquisition of student skills that enhance post-school employability, with education serving as the antecedent and model for employment, and then measuring similarities between study and work [12]. However, this mode of researching the mediating effect of education could not be applied in this research. Since the research cohort still has three (3) full academic years plus six (6) weeks of bridging to go, an assessment of their current perceived level of employability might provide insight into reasons for their degree programme choices. The role of familial influence in this study and career choices would also be instructive.

On the other hand, four-group-informed research by [13] found that male graduates, female graduate, employers, and university lecturers show differing priorities for employability skills. While the research shows gender as a mediating influence on employability and used self-assessment, it nevertheless raises some strategic decision-making guidelines on managing graduates' careers informed by entry-level research findings in the field of computer science in Sri Lanka.

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hort so that, as [9] notes, education systems that restrict creativity, capability, and ability to relate to others while conditioning young people to depend on others for employment opportunities are not in step with society needs in the new millennium.

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2.3. Course ratings and Industry Links

[14] suggests that joint projects with industry (like guest lectures) allows students to get a more robust learning experience while [15] suggests that there is a tendency to respond "favourably" on scales used in research. This is both from the students and from teachers when measuring attitudes and their changes in training courses in colleges, universities, and industry. To counter this inclination, when administering evaluation forms, particularly for students, it is important to compare elements of coursesso that courses can be judges against how good they are when stacked against other courses.

2.4. Familial Support

The influence on familial support on course choice and eventual employability appears limited. Some indicative questions to ask in this area are: Does the parent, sibling's profession influence course/degree choice? Are some students driven into some programmes that they do not properly fit in (based on their aptitude and eventual career plans)? What sources of information do students use to make decisions on courses? Are fairs/adverts enough to ensure that students have comprehensive formal sources of information when making course/program choices?

However, a summary of literature in the period 2016-2021 by [16] found that individual aspects of career development—such as personal background and psychological attributes, including family expectations of social mobility by researchers in Thailand as expectations together with other research concerned with contextual and institutional variables, from career guidance to broader structural conditions of society and the labour market are some of the support structures and influences.

3. Methodology

The research is based on a quantitative study undertaken with students at a quasi-government funded higher education institution in Botswana. The population of the students enrolled in the Faculty/School as of the dates at which the research was done are detailed as below. The methods for both cohorts were quantitative [17] [18] [19].

As of December 2015, and December 2017, the population of students in the

above programmes was 1162 (in 2015) and 752 students (in 2017). The table below (Table 2) and further notes outline some of the sampling and data-collection procedures and decisions.

Note that the International Tourism students are both for Francistown and Gaborone. Although the research was conducted among the Gaborone students, a breakdown of the students between the campuses is not available although the number of students in Francistown is generally lower than in Gaborone.

From Table 2, the overall response rate is 25% (296/1162 students) in 2015 and 31% (234/752 students) in 2017, making an overall response rate of 28% (530/1914 students over the two cohorts/intakes).

Quantitative study can be enhanced by internal validity checks [18] [20]. To this end a self-developed Likert scale questionnaire with 30 items (questions) was deployed in the research. A sample of the questionnaire is included in **Appendix**. The questions were grouped into two classes, 1) "level of agreement" and 2) "level of interest" with their selected course and the institutional facilities in place and their degree of interest in using these to enhance their eventual employability. [19] suggests that overall patterns in data are more important than minute detail and to this end only selected highlights showing patterns that stood out are presented.

The institution at which the research was conducted has three fully functional schools; 1) business and leisure, 2) computing and information technology, 3) finance, investment, and accounting and 4) a consultancy division that offers short courses. The three schools offer degree programmes and professional accountancy and tax courses. There are also four programmes offered at Master's level on block-release. A sample of 296 (2015) and 234 (2017) full-time bridging level students were selected from the School of Business and Leisure and a common structured, close-ended questionnaire administered, making the total number of respondents 530 students.

Table 2. Population of students in the School of Business & Leisure.

Year/level of study >	Number of students (population)			Number of students (Responses)			Response rate (% of responses/total population)		
	2015	2017	Total	2015	2017	Total	2015	2017	Total
Programme of study									
Business Management	234	191	425	54	52	106	5%	7%	6%
Entrepreneurship & Business Leadership	313	202	515	52	52	104	4%	7%	5%
International Finance & Banking	208	114	322	57	45	102	5%	7%	5%
International Tourism Management ##	407	245	652	133	85	218	11%	11%	11%
Total	**1162**	**752**	**1914**	**296**	**234**	**530**	**25%**	**31%**	**28%**

The paper focused on degree course enrolled on while students are still engaged at the bridging stage which covered 12 weeks. Research was conducted during the sixth week of teaching with the assistance of a mix of part-time and full-time lecturers currently teaching four common modules on the bridging course.

The lecturers assisted with administering of the questionnaire and collection of the completed questionnaires. All students answered the questionnaire individually and had a choice of not participating in the research. A cover letter was attached to each questionnaire outlining their right to consent to participate in the research.

The limitation of the study was the restriction of respondents to one faculty/school in a larger institution that offers other courses in other disciplines. However, the chosen faculty/school has the largest number of students in the institution and can be considered as representative of the whole college.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Overall Summary of Findings

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics (minimum and maximum scores on the Likert scales), means and standard deviations side-by-side between the two cohorts studied. The 2015 cohort had 296 respondents while the 2017 cohort had 234 respondents.

Table 3 shows that on average (using the mean), the students in the 2015 cohort selected the course to become more marketable in the future, to obtain technical knowledge in their chosen field and that they intended to make a mark in their chosen field, among some of the questions with high means for this cohort.

The standard deviation from these averages (means) are low (below 1.00) for these selected questions. For the 2017 cohort the questions with the highest average (means) were around students showing interest in learning the progress rules required to finish their course, and as for the 2015 cohort, an intention to make a mark in their chosen field and having chosen the course to become more marketable in future. The standard deviation for the responses to these questions is also low.

4.2. Internal consistency of instrument

The overall internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha and it was found to be reliable (Table 4).

According to [21] classification of Cronbach's alpha reliability in Table 5 above as ready with Table 4 of above, the instrument used in the research is reliable and shows internal consistency.

4.3. Overview of Participants

Table 6 summarizes the participants by age groups.

Table 3. Summary descriptive statistics.

Descriptive Statistics	2015 Cohort n = 296					2017 Cohort n = 234				
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Age	296	1	6	2.93	1.02	234	1	6	2.55	0.93
Programme	296	1	5	3.14	1.43	234	1	5	2.88	1.42
The bridging course is preparing me for higher education	296	1	5	4.13	0.96	234	1	5	4.15	0.87
I selected the right course of study	296	1	5	4.30	0.84	234	1	5	4.27	0.81
I feel ready for the world of work	296	1	5	3.42	1.03	234	1	5	3.19	1.03
My current skills could have allowed me to get a job	296	1	5	2.81	1.15	234	1	5	2.58	1.10
I chose tertiary education to become more marketable in future	296	1	5	4.61	0.70	234	1	5	4.47	0.85
I chose tertiary education to obtain more technical skills in my chosen field	296	1	5	4.47	0.84	234	1	5	4.42	0.85
My parents/siblings assisted me to select this course	296	1	5	2.91	1.51	234	1	5	2.77	1.40
My tutors at the college will adequately prepare me for my chose profession	296	1	5	3.99	0.89	234	1	5	3.81	0.84
The facilities at the college (library, IT, wi-fi, rooms, hostels) are adequate	296	1	5	3.33	1.28	233	1	5	3.50	1.17
Making friends at the college for the next three years will assist me in professional networking later	296	1	5	3.86	1.06	234	1	5	3.92	0.90
Visiting and consulting lecturers assists me with problem areas	296	1	5	4.16	0.78	234	1	5	4.07	0.83
Class Representatives add value to my learning	296	1	5	2.98	1.29	234	1	5	2.85	1.16
I prefer individual assignments to group work	296	1	5	3.48	1.42	234	1	5	3.46	1.39
Seminars & tutorials are better than lectures	296	1	5	3.52	1.14	234	1	5	3.36	1.15
I feel that if things get tough, I might drop out of college	296	1	5	1.79	1.26	234	1	5	2.09	1.30
I will make full use of extra-class activities to enhance my employability	296	1	5	4.13	1.09	234	1	5	4.28	0.86
Mentors at the college will guide me develop professionally	296	1	5	4.10	0.94	234	3	5	4.14	0.73
I will make full of the library team at the college	296	1	5	4.13	0.92	234	1	5	4.06	0.97
Group assignments and presentations assist me to learn	296	1	5	4.11	1.12	234	1	5	4.05	1.08
I will persist when given challenging assignments	296	1	5	4.31	0.89	234	1	5	4.12	1.01
I intend to make a mark in my chosen profession	296	1	5	4.68	0.76	234	2	5	4.70	0.63
I know my course Programme Leader at the college	296	1	5	3.35	1.36	234	1	5	3.37	1.26
I have at least interacted once in this semester with my Programme Leader	296	1	5	3.14	1.38	234	1	5	2.90	1.36

Continued

I will make sure my appearance reflects the expectations of my profession	296	1	5	4.40	0.92	234	1	5	4.32	0.94
I will live the student values of the college	296	1	5	4.31	1.02	234	1	5	4.31	0.89
I will make sure I understand my rights, my responsibilities, and the regulations (3Rs) of the college	296	1	5	4.47	0.91	234	1	5	4.52	0.70
I am interested in learning the progression rules required to finish my course	296	1	5	4.52	0.92	234	1	5	4.55	0.72
I find the college facilities (library, IT, wi-fi, hostels) interesting	296	1	5	3.61	1.24	234	1	5	.81	1.10
My parents/family/siblings are interested in my academic progress	296	1	5	4.24	1.09	234	1	5	4.28	1.02
I will allow role models at the college and in industry to influence me	296	1	5	4.08	1.13	234	1	5	.23	1.00

Table 4. Reliability

	2015	2017
Number of items	32	32
Cronbach's alpha	0.754	0.710

Table 5. Ranges of alpha reliability.

Level	Comment
>0.90	Very highly reliable
0.80 - 0.90	Highly reliable
0.70 - 0.79	**Reliable**
0.60 - 0.69	Marginally/minimally reliable
<0.60	Unacceptably low reliability
	[21]

Table 6. Overview of sample (participants)—by age group.

	2015		2017	
	No.	%	No.	%
16 - 17 years	9	3.0	18	7.7
17 - 18 years	96	32.4	103	44.0
19 - 20 years	131	44.3	94	40.2
20 - 21years	37	12.5	9	3.8
22 - 23 years	14	4.7	5	2.1
23+ years	9	3.0	5	2.1
Total	**296**	**100.0**	**234**	**100.0**

Table 6 shows that most of the student respondents were in the 17 - 20 years age range. By programme studied there was a good spread across programmes offered as the table below shows. Representation across the programmes studying the foundation level was considered representative.

Table 7 above shows the highest representation in the 2015 cohort coming from the International Tourism degree course at 23% of the 296 total students while in the 2017 cohort the highest representation in the 2017 cohort was from the International Banking and Finance and the Accounting and Finance degree courses at 22.2% each of the total 234 of the cohort.

A selection of responses grouped according to "*level of agreement*" and "*level of interest*" is presented in the following table (Table 8).

From Table 8, it is evident students in both cohorts felt that they chose tertiary education to become marketable in the future, but additionally to obtain more technical skills in their chosen field and that they felt that they selected the right course of study for this.

On having selected the right course to student, 149 (50.3%) of the 296 of 2015 respondents strongly agreed compared to 104 (44.4%) of 234 of the 2017 respondents.

The highest levels of agreement were shown in both the 2015 and the 2017 cohorts on having chosen tertiary education to become more marketable in future, indicating that 203 (68.6%) of the 296 respondents in 2015 felt this was compared to 140 (59.8%) of the 234 respondents in the 2017 cohort. The same pattern showed in strong agreement on having chosen tertiary education to obtain technical skills in chosen field. In this instance, 184 (62.2%) of the 296 respondents in 2015 strongly agreed, compared to 135 (57.6%) of the 243 respondents in 2017.

In the level of interest grouping, the highest level of agreement was shown making use of extra-curricular activities to enhance employment, with 143 (48.3%) of the 296 respondents in 2015 compared to 115 (60%) of the 234 respondents in 2017. This was followed by group assignments and presentations being shown to assist the students in learning, indicating that 143 (48.3%) of the 296 respondents in 2015 felt these activities assisted them compared to 98

Table 7. Overview of Sample (participants)—Programme.

	2015		2017	
	No.	%	No.	%
International Banking & Finance	54	18.2	52	22.2
Accounting & Finance	52	17.6	52	22.2
Business Management	57	19.3	45	19.2
Entrepreneurship & Business Leadership	65	22.0	43	18.4
International Tourism	68	23.0	42	17.9
Total	**296**	**100.0**	**234**	**100.0**

Table 8. Selected responses.

Level of agreement	2015	%	2017	%
(Strongly Agree)	n = 296		n = 234	
I selected the right course of study	149	50.3%	104	44.4%
I feel ready for the world of work	46	15.5%	26	11.1%
I chose tertiary education to become more marketable in future	203	68.6%	140	59.8%
I chose tertiary education to obtain more technical skills in my chosen field	184	62.2%	135	57.6%
My parents/siblings assisted me to select this course	56	18.9%	29	12.4%
My tutors at the college will adequately prepare me for my chosen profession	90	30.4%	41	17.5%

Level of interest	2015	%	2017	%
(Very interested)	n = 296		n = 234	
I will make full use of extra-class activities to enhance my employability	143	48.3%	117	50.0%
Group assignments/presentations assist me to learn	143	48.3%	98	41.8%
I know my course Programme Leader at the college	86	29.1%	61	26.0%
I have at least interacted once in this semester with my Programme Leader	61	20.6%	38	16.2%
I find the college facilities (library, IT, wi-fi, hostels) interesting	87	29.4%	76	32.%
I will allow role models at the college and in industry to influence me	144	48.6%	123	52.5%

(41.8%) of the 234 respondents in 2017.

Lastly, allowing role models, whether these are at the institution, or they are external from industry showed the highest level of interest in allowing the students to be influenced. In the 2015 cohort, 144 (48.6%) of the 296 respondents strongly felt role models influenced them highly compared to 123 (52.5%) of the 234 respondents from the 2017 cohort.

The evidence above suggests that students intend to make full use of extra-class activities to enhance their employability and use group assignments and presentations to assist them in learning. This level of interest would necessarily require role models at the college and in industry to influence the students who appear to be very receptive towards this.

4.4. Correlations

Correlation is a statistical measure of the degree to which variables move in coordination with one another [17]. The three highest frequency items both in the "*level of agreement*" and "*level of interest*" as per the above Table 6 were also checked with respect to their correlations for each of the two cohorts as below.

From below Table 9, the items with the highest ratings (course selection, marketability, and technical skills acquisition) are positively correlated at a significant level to related items on technical skills and marketability. This implies that students selected courses with the eventual marketability in employment

Table 9. Pearson Correlations—2015 cohort (highest frequencies from Table 3—n = 296).

	Mean	Standard Deviation	I chose tertiary education to obtain more technical skills in my chosen field	I chose tertiary education to become more marketable in future
I selected the right course of study	4.30	0.837	0.269**	
I chose tertiary education to become more marketable in future	4.61	0.695	0.338**	
I chose tertiary education to obtain more technical skills in my chosen field	4.47	0.835		0.338**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

being crucial and related to obtaining technical skills in the selected field of study.

For the 2017 cohort (Table 10), the same highest frequency items under the level of agreement grouping are positively correlated to the bridging course preparing the students for higher education and an intention to use extra-class activities to enhance the student's employability.

For the 2015 cohort the tops three items with the highest frequency rankings (use of extra-class activities, group tasks and role module influence) had significant correlation to mentors guiding students to develop professionally at the 0.01 confidence levels (Table 11). For this cohort they valued mentoring and guidance to develop professionally.

For the 2017 cohort there were significant positive correlations with highest frequency ranking items (use of extra-class activities, group tasks and role module influence) to the bridging course preparing the students for higher education and visiting and consulting lecturers assisting the students in problem areas (Table 12). These correlations were mostly significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) with somewhat lower standard deviation than for the same highest frequency raking items in the 2015 cohort.

5. General Conclusions

The students chose their programmes to make them more "marketable" in the job market/future and this was more so in 2015 than in 2017. The students did not feel "ready for work" (*yet*) and would probably require more technical skills which were ranked as important by the Bridging students. The 2017 cohort felt less (44%) than the 2015 cohort (50%) that they selected the "right course" to study.

To this end, extra-class activities that enhance employability and are valued by both cohorts (2015 & 2017) must be enhanced as about 50% of students are very interested in these. This is recommended by other researchers such as [20]. The use of group work/assignments is treasured by both cohorts (2015 & 2017) ranging at above 40% of the students who are very interested in these.

Table 10. Pearson Correlations—2017 cohort (highest frequencies from Table 3—n = 234).

	Mean	Standard Deviation	I feel ready for the world of work	The bridging course is preparing me for higher education	I will make full use of extra-class activities to enhance my employability
I selected the right course of study	4.27	0.807	0.226**		
I chose tertiary education to become more marketable in future	4.47	0.855		0.180**	
I chose tertiary education to obtain more technical skills in my chosen field	4.42	0.851			0.294**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11. Pearson Correlations—2015 cohort (highest frequencies from Table 3—n = 296).

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mentors at the college will guide me develop professionally
I will make full use of extra-class activities to enhance my employability	4.13	1.0929	**0.455**
Group assignments and presentations assist me to learn	4.11	1.1188	**0.243**
I will allow role models at the college and in industry to influence me	4.08	1.1307	**0.438**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 12. Pearson Correlations—2017 cohort (highest frequencies from Table 3—n = 234).

	Mean	Standard Deviation	The bridging course is preparing me for higher education	Visiting and consulting lecturers assists me with problem areas
I will make full use of extra-class activities to enhance my employability	4.28	0.8576	0.252**	
Group assignments and presentations assist me to learn	4.05	1.0752		0.259**
I will allow role models at the college and in industry to influence me	4.23	0.9956	0.168*	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The college must ensure that role models that can influence students to see their chosen career are provided a chance through perhaps guest lectures and industry visits to increase accessibility [22]. These arrangements will allow the students to learn from the practitioners as well and experience first-hand the practical work environment that they will be working in after graduation while they are studying. This allows for thoughtful observation so that they get mentally prepared for the world of work.

6. Practical Implications

The institution should incorporate more group work/collaborative assignments/activities to simulate the real world of work and make more use of industry role models or alumni as guest lecturers in course delivery. It also appears that work-readiness is still low, and the feeling for this must be improved as students' progress upwards in years 1, 2 & 3.

The Course Managers/Programme Leaders at the college must be more "*visible*" to the students to inspire and guide students, while interactions between students and Programme Leaders must be improved/increased.

From the findings, it also appears that parents/siblings have less influence in course/programme choice. The wider implications for this are that the marketing of the degree courses might need to be more targeted towards the individual potential students.

7. Theoretical Implications

This research on attitudes towards higher education courses and eventually marketability and employability has assisted in contributing to what is known through cross-sectional time-driven empirical research in a business school. The theoretical implications are in the development of instruments to measure level of agreement and level of interest in using available institutional facilities and arrangements to assist students in enhancing their eventual marketability and employability.

This area of research requires further locally relevant research to ensure that the knowledge-economy aspirations of Botswana are informed by empirical research to influence practice and teaching post-senior secondary school education at institution-level and to inform policy at national level.

8. Future research Suggestions

Further research could incorporate teaching/lecturing staff views and industry hiring professionals to corroborate students' views which might be somewhat optimistic. This three-way research would assist in ensuring that the skills being acquired by the students are relevant and required by potential employers.

9. Shortcomings and Limitations

The restriction of respondents to one faculty/school/location (Gaborone) in a larger institution that offers other courses in other disciplines is acknowledged as a limitation, however, the chosen faculty/school/location has the largest number of students in the institution and can be considered as representative of the whole college. Another limitation was the lack of responses from the institutions' academic and non-academic staff who administer the support structures under investigation. Since the student's views might be somewhat naïve and could be considered not fully informed, the views of staff would have tampered and corroborated the student's views.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix. Data Gathering Was Based on the Items Below

Answer these questions using the scale indicated below		
Description	**Likert scale**	
Strongly disagree	= **1**	
Disagree	= **2**	**Please tick your appropriate response**
Not sure	= **3**	
Agree	= **4**	
Strongly agree	= **5**	

Level of agreement	1	2	3	4	5
The bridging course is preparing me for higher education					
I selected the right course of study					
I feel ready for the world of work					
My current skills could have allowed me to get a job					
I chose tertiary education to become more marketable in future					
I chose tertiary education to obtain more technical skills in my chosen field					
My parents/siblings assisted me to select this course					
My tutors at the college will adequately prepare me for my chose profession					
The facilities at the college (library, IT, wi-fi, rooms, hostels) are adequate					
Making friends at the college for the next three years will assist me in professional networking later					
Visiting and consulting lecturers assists me with problem areas					
Class Representatives add value to my learning					
I prefer individual assignments to group work					
Seminars & tutorials are better than lectures					
I feel that if things get tough, I might drop out of college					

Answer these questions using the scale indicated below		
Description	**Likert scale**	
Not at all interested	= **1**	
Not very interested	= **2**	**Please tick your appropriate response**
Neutral	= **3**	
Somewhat interested	= **4**	
Very interested	= **5**	

Level of interest	1	2	3	4	5
I will make full use of extra-class activities to enhance my employability					
Mentors at the college will guide me develop professionally					
I will make full of the library team at the college					
Group assignments and presentations assist me to learn					
I will persist when given challenging assignments					
I intend to make a mark in my chosen profession					
I know my course Programme Leader at the college					
I have at least interacted once in this semester with my Programme Leader					
I will make sure my appearance reflects the expectations of my profession					
I will live the student values of the college					
I will make sure I understand my rights, my responsibilities, and the regulations (3Rs) of the college					
I am interested in learning the progression rules required to finish my course					
I find the college facilities (library, IT, wi-fi, hostels) interesting					
My parents/family/siblings are interested in my academic progress					
I will allow role models at the college and in industry to influence me					